

Bulletin

Quarterly Bulletin No. 383 July 2021

<https://tasfieldnats.org.au>

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Excursion to Lake Dulverton

Saturday 6th February



Field Nats at Lake Dulverton, Oatlands
Photograph: Eddie Gall

At the May General Meeting, Clare Hawkins gave an interesting talk entitled *Where Where Wedgie 2018-2020: Getting to Know Your Raptors*. She gave some history about the *Where Where Wedgie* surveys, some information about the upcoming survey and pointers on how to distinguish raptor species. Armed with this information, 8 TFNC members were led by Clare on a vehicle-based circuit along roads in the Oatlands area. We met at Lake Dulverton and bought coffees from a local café to warm us in the in cool, breezy weather.

Lake Dulverton is a great place to spot waders and water birds. Walking around, we saw Eurasian Coot, Mallard

Ducks and Black Swans as well as a flock of Little Pied Cormorants sitting on a sculpture in the lake. Our first sighting of a raptor was a Swamp Harrier sweeping over the waters. This was soon followed by spotting our first Wedge-tailed eagle, gliding effortlessly before disappearing to the north.

We drove our vehicles along York Plains Road which is a little north of Oatlands. At our first stop, we watched a Wedge-tailed Eagle. Soon after, we pulled over near fields and observed three more eagles in the distance. They may have been a family group. At a third stop, we spotted three falcons zooming back and forth over a nearby hill. Because of their speed we thought they could have been Peregrine Falcons. Their distance made identification difficult so there was friendly debate as to whether they were Peregrine Falcons or Brown Falcons. Photos we took later showed they were likely to be Brown Falcons. Shortly after there was a hurried stop and excitement when we spotted a brown falcon on a nearby power pole. It did not perch for long before it flew to some nearby trees before disappearing over the fields.

We had a pleasant lunch in the sun at Pawtella oval. Noisy Miners, Australian Magpies, Eurasian Skylarks and Ravens flew nearby. Continuing on our way, we saw a large flock of Grey Currawongs in a field and a Wedge-tailed Eagle cruising nearby. After passing through Andover, the sightings dried up and we drove on to finish at Oatlands.

Thanks for guiding us, Clare!

Eddie Gall

Excursion to Cape Deslacs

Saturday 5th June

Alexander Graham Bell is responsible for the perhaps overly optimistic saying "When one door closes, another opens." And yes, it was disappointing for those 30 members who had their hearts set on a trip to Betsey Island which didn't eventuate due to bad weather. However, the gentle stroll along the back of Clifton Beach proved to be quite rewarding for the 14 who turned up for this substitute excursion. For a start, it was the first time several of us had been on this 2–3 km low altitude circuit track that takes one through coastal heaths and woodland, along coastal cliffs and a short beach walk back to the car park. The forecasted bad weather of high winds and rain held off and we all got back in our usual straggly manner in one piece if not one group.

Cape Deslacs was discovered and named by D'Entrecasteaux in 1792, after an apprentice on board his ship who was a godson of the French Minister of Marine responsible for the expedition. Young Deslac was a wild lad thirsting for adventure and after returning to France joined the war against the English, which brought an end to his adventuring as he was killed at Trafalgar. His full name was Charles Francois Hippolyte-Deslac d'Arcombol and it seems probable that D'Entrecasteaux named the Hippolyte Rocks after this youth's third Christian name.

The vegetation is coastal scrub on very sandy soil with the usual plants of which there were still a few in flower viz., *Banksia marginata*, the white and pink forms of *Epacris impressa*, *Leucopogon ericoides*, the prostrate *Hibbertia procumbens*, but not the display of the spring and neither were the insects in abundance. Birdwise, the little Silvereyes twitted in the trees, a sea eagle soared high in the sky and an owl pellet was conveniently deposited on the look-out railing.



Owl pellet
Photograph: Geoff Carle

Some orchid leaves were spotted, and a few stunted fungi pushed their way through the sand presenting abnormally and causing some panic as to their identification. One rather uncommon find was the ghoul fungus that belongs to the *Hebeloma aminophilum* group growing in association with the bones of a rabbit; as the name reveals "amino-: amino acid, -phil-: loving" these fungi are nitrogen-loving. Usually, these dry coastal areas are very good for fungi during the cold winter months, but it was still too dry.

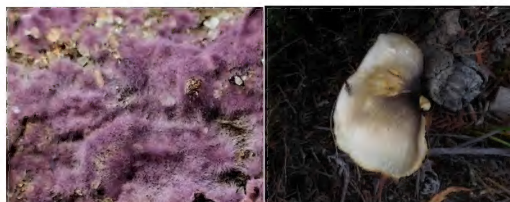


Hebeloma aminophilum
Photograph: Genevieve Gates

Amanda did find an old ghost fungus (*Omphalotus nidiformis*) with a most obliging fungus fly *Tapeigaster* sp. that had taken up residence on the surface and posed for a photoshoot and Kevin turned over a dry stick and we were rewarded with a beautiful purple resupinate fungus *Phlebiopsis crassa* group. David was very pleased to see *Melaleuca gibbosa* for the first time which goes to show there are still surprises to be found even after many decades of botanising—you just have to be out there!

Thank you to the committee for organising this excursion at such short notice, it was most enjoyable.

Genevieve Gates



Phlebiopsis crassa and *Omphalotus nidiformis*
Photographs: Genevieve Gates



Tapeigaster fly found on ghost fungus at Cape Deslacs
Photograph: Genevieve Gates

Excursion to Coal River Tier

Sunday 5th July

Twenty-five Field Nats attended the July Trip to the Coal River Tier just outside of Richmond. Zoodoo Zoos wildlife refuge accounts for approximately 25% of a remnant community of *Dry Eucalypt globulus* Woodland forest and Kangaroo grass /Poa grasslands. The Zoo has recently changed ownership and Donna Cuttriss is developing a new direction and vision and is enthusiastic about encouraging science based investigation of the natural values of the tier and engaging with community and education groups in the process. The TFNC group met at the zoo entry at 9:30 to be guided up to the refuge beyond the zoos rear perimeter boundary.



Field Nats at Coal River Tier walk
Photograph: Amanda Thomson

A project had been set up on the iNaturalist app by Peter, Amanda, Eddie and others and this proved a great tool with each small specialist group splitting off and heading into the refuge to start cataloging their particular finds. We had a great mix of generalist and specialist naturalists covering all the major taxonomic groups. Data could be entered directly insitu or at anytime after the day. To date the group have logged 200 species from the refuge which is quite phenomenal and indicative of just how valuable this remnant of bush is. With the help of TFNC another project has created that will capture all records made within the boundaries of the refuge.

Over time this information will be critical in managing and monitoring the health of the ecosystem as development continues to occur around it. By having the tier recognized for these values, it will hopefully incite interest from similarly minded organisations to work collaboratively with the zoo, specialist groups and local landowners for the greater good of preserving the area. Sitting in the coal river catchment and source of some of its water, this area has unknown value in ensuring ecosystem services are maintained for the surrounding agricultural activities. The Coal River catchment of 620sq km flows into the RAMSAR listed wetlands Pitt Water - Orielton Lagoon Ramsar site Ecological Character Description (environment.gov.au) and a tributary into this, Pages Creek, collects the run off from the tier at the bottom of the zoo and runs along the valley to connect with the Coal River at Richmond. Along its journey it also passes through the golf club where there is one of the few known populations, in the south, of *Litoria raniformis* the Growling grass frog...Tassie's largest amphibian.

Future trips in the warmer weather will be sure to turn up many additional species for this list. Looking ahead,



Naturalising – it's what we do!
Photograph: Eddie Gall

we are exploring bulk DNA sequencing, a technique where a sample of soil and leaf litter is extracted for its DNA in one process and the sequences produced are automatically checked against databases to identify any living organism (or DNA fragment of it) in the sample and allocate a taxon to it. This is especially handy for soil micro organisms and traces of other hard to collect and identify species that may only leave a trace in the environment. This is not dissimilar to the current COVID-19 testing at sewerage plants.

The zoo is working towards developing and facilitating a catchment wide program that embraces maintaining functioning ecosystems where humans and nature can thrive alongside one another. This will include not only caring for the existing biodiversity, but finding novel ways to enhance it. Partnerships with Landcare and the Understorey Network are the beginning of this initiative to commence planning on the most appropriate way ahead, incorporating agricultural activities into the mix. Initiatives such as shelter belt planting with habitat for wildlife, feral cat and weed control are in the pipeline for this. You can hear more about the zoos plans at the next TFNC meeting.

As a member of TFNC and employee of Zoodoo, I am absolutely thrilled that TFNC members dedicated their time and expertise to assist in building a better understanding of this area. I hope that we can continue to document the biodiversity over the varying seasons and use the refuge to reach out to the wider community to engage them in nature based activities. This could also be a means to attract new members to TFNC.

Steve Hamilton

A new species of snail

Last October I did a preliminary snail survey of Zoodoo's bushland and recorded nine native snail species. This was a decent number but I was a little surprised to only find one species of the family Charopidae, a family of mostly tiny snails that makes up most of Tasmania's land snail diversity.

On the July outing Abbey and I spent much of our time walking around the top of the property and much less time actually surveying, but the 45 minutes we did spend looking for snails in the main gully around the edge of the property was very successful, with two more charopids recorded. These included Abbey getting the first Zoodoo record of *Bonhamaropa* sp "Barossa Hill" (a fairly common SE Tas dry forest species) but also just as we were about to leave I found a flat whitish 1.5 mm wide snail that I could not immediately identify.

I thought this snail might be a juvenile of the endangered Ammonite Snail (*Ammoniropa vigens*) but when I put it under the microscope at home I found its sculpture was different. These small charopids have a sculpture of regular riblets, but between the riblets is an intricate pattern of smaller spiral and radial lines that can only be seen with a good microscope. On this specimen the adult spiral micro-sculpture was very bold and obvious under the microscope while the radial micro-sculpture between the riblets was very hard to see. This is quite unusual, although some undescribed *Bonhamaropa* species have a somewhat similar sculpture.



Microscope photographs of the new species found at Zoodoo
Photograph: Kevin Bonham

After comparing the Zoodoo specimen to hundreds of others I've collected it became clear that it didn't closely match anything and was another new species (and perhaps new genus, or it may be an unusual *Bonhamaropa*) to add to the many dozens of undescribed charopids here that are awaiting formal description. Eastern Tasmania especially has a great diversity of these small and often very localised charopids and the more large areas of good habitat land owners like Zoodoo can preserve the more of these, often unknown, species we can keep alive!

Kevin Bonham

Call for papers

2021 The Tasmanian Naturalist

A last reminder that papers for this year's Tasmanian Naturalist need to be submitted by 31 August 2021 to the Editor, Sabine Borgis. Email: editor@tasfieldnats.org.au

For more information see: <https://www.tasfieldnats.org.au/naturalist/>

News from the TFNC Committee

The Bulletin format has been changing!

As members know, we changed the Bulletin newsletter to a fully digital format at the end of last year and at the same time we stopped advertising in it our monthly Speakers and Excursions. The TFNC Committee decided that our website will always list this information on its front page. See <https://www.tasfieldnats.org.au/>, where information is up to date. The President will continue to detail this information in the monthly email sent out to members a week or two before our upcoming General meetings and Excursions.

Information about excursions and speakers is found on our website under 'About us' and 'Archives' menu links.

iNaturalist

This edition of the Bulletin will be the first for a number of years NOT to contain the lists of species (birds, plants, fungi, invertebrates etc.) which were collected on our excursions. Instead, at the suggestion of one of our members, for the last two excursions the club has been trialling posting them onto **iNaturalist (Australia)**. In his most recent email Eddie Gall explained that we have created our own umbrella Project 'Tas Field Nats' and Peter Crofts' instructions were provided in it how to use them. It is intended that each of our excursions will have its own sub project under this umbrella:

<https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/tasmanian-field-naturalists-club-tfnc>

Each Bulletin will of course still contain a report on the most recent excursions and will include mention of the species found of most interest.

What are the benefits of using iNaturalist? It is used around the world to record observations of nature. It is widely used by citizen scientists and it means that our own excursion observations can be of benefit to others rather than being locked away in hard-to-access lists in our Bulletin!

Last year, our member Clare Hawkins wrote for us some easy-to-follow iNaturalist instructions which are on our website at: <https://www.tasfieldnats.org.au/citizen-science/> and in addition Peter Crofts' recent instructions on how to use TFNC's Projects on iNaturalist can also be found at this address.

Please remember that a single photograph is often not sufficient for an identification to be made on iNaturalist. It frequently needs two or even three photographs and sometimes a comment to cover the necessary identification features.

Identifications

If you feel confident, by all means agree/confirm or change your own or others identifications. To reach 'research level,' every observation has to be agreed by two of three observers. However please do not just agree with an identification unless you feel completely confident in it and fully understand why it is that species.

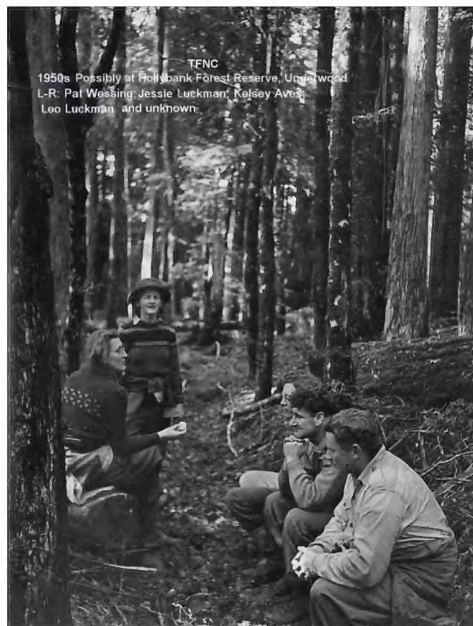
iNaturalist has a good FAQ on when and when not to agree with observations. See: <https://inaturalist.org.au/pages/help#identification>

In answer to a member's iNaturalist question: "Is the iNaturalist data uploaded to the Tasmanian Natural Values Atlas (NVA) and the Australian Living Atlas (ALA)?"

1. *The Tasmanian NVA has created a Project which automatically collects up all the Research grade Tasmanian iNaturalist records to include in the NVA.*
2. *Data is harvested from iNaturalist Australia to ALA daily. After processing, it is refreshed once per week. Observations will come across to the ALA if they are:*
 - *Shareable under a Creative Commons license*
 - *In Australia*
 - *Verifiable observations - those which are marked Needs ID or Research Grade*

If an iNaturalist observation is updated with a new identification, image, or a changed location, the record in ALA will be updated as part of the regular data harvest. If records are removed from iNaturalist, they will be removed from ALA.

Historic Note: Jessie Luckman



Pat Wessing, Jessie Luckman Kelsey Aves and Leo Luckman
Photograph: Alan Hewer

Jessie Luckman nee Wakefield (1910-2014) was made a Life member of TFNC in 1977.

Like many of our current members, Jessie was also a member of the Hobart Walking Club and had been made one of their Life Members in 1963.

After Jessie's death, the collected papers of Jessie and her husband Leo Luckman were deposited with the Archives of Tasmania. Some of these have now been accessioned and made available on line. This candid photograph album compiled by Jessie from before she was married is just one of the records available and may be of interest for some of our members who knew Jessie

[libraries Tasmania - NS5862-1-2 \(stors.tas.gov.au\)](http://libraries.tasmania - NS5862-1-2 (stors.tas.gov.au))



Club coffee mugs are available for sale for \$10 at Meetings and Excursions.

Observation: Southern Snow Flea

Southern snow-fleas, also known as snow scorpion-flies, are endemic to the mountains of Tasmania, with four described species, each occupying a different mountain massif. The adults are active in cold weather, emerging in autumn and still going strong in early winter; it seems they feed on the dead remains of the previous summer's insects. I often try my luck at finding these strange little creatures at this time of year. They can be trapped, sometimes in large numbers, using pitfall-traps, but can also be found individually by closely examining the fine leaf-litter that accumulates at the base of alpine shrubs. This year I failed to find any on the Hartz, but eventually had success on the Pinnacle area of kunanyi / Mount Wellington.



Southern Snow Flea *Apteropanorpa tasmanica*
Photograph: Simon Grove

Southern snow-fleas are a unique lineage (family Apteropanorpidae) in the insect order Mecoptera. The common name for the order as a whole is the scorpion-flies, but that name comes from one northern-hemisphere lineage (the family Panorpidae) whose members are winged (hence the 'fly' bit) and have curled-up 'tails' (hence the 'scorpion' bit). Our snow-fleas have neither – though to me they look more like miniature crickets than fleas. However, there is a further northern-hemisphere lineage of mecopterans, the Boreidae, whose members are more widely known as snow-fleas: these look rather like our Tasmanian animals, and are flightless and winter-active which is why I

appropriated the name for our 'southern' versions. But these two lineages, living towards opposite ends of the planet, seemingly evolved independently, each from fully-winged mecopteran ancestors. We do have winged mecopterans in Australia (including Tasmania): the hanging-flies (family Bittacidae), which look rather like large craneflies but have two pairs of wings rather than one; and the nannochoristas (family Nannochoristidae), which look rather like lacewings.



Southern Snow Flea *Apteropanorpa tasmanica*
Photograph: Simon Grove

Members of all these lineages of mecopterans have a downward-pointing 'face'. The true fleas (order Siphonaptera) also share this feature, and it has long been speculated that perhaps the true fleas' evolutionary origins lie among the ancestors of today's mecopterans – though the true flies have also been considered a candidate ancestor too. Recent genetic analyses of the transcriptomes of a range of insects including fleas, flies and mecopterans, provide strong evidence that true fleas are indeed highly derived mecopterans. But in the analyses (for which TMAG contributed specimens), rather than either of the snow-flea lineages emerging as the sister group to the true fleas, it was the nannochoristas that did so! If that's the case, there must have been, in the distant past, a third mecopteran lineage (related to today's nannochoristas) that lost their wings and took up the 'flea-like' habitus, eventually evolving into today's true fleas.

Simon Grove

General Meeting Venue

We had hoped to be able to return to UTAS in time for our August 2021 meeting, but the UTAS Life Sciences Lecture theatre is not being made available for after-hours meetings. Our August meeting will therefore still be held at Mathers House Upper-level room. As usual in this COVID-era members must sanitise hands on arrival, use the QR code **as well as** signing with your name and contact number for our own records and insurance purposes. Members will be advised if an alternative venue can be arranged. It of course also means that our Library remains out of reach as it is outside the UTAS Life Sciences lecture theatre.

Position vacant - Bulletin Editor

Deirdre Brown is retiring from this position and this will be her last Bulletin as Editor. We sincerely thank Deirdre for the past seven years of excellent Bulletin editions.

We are therefore **urgently looking** for a replacement Bulletin Editor. There are four editions each year January, May, July and October. One edition remains for 2021. The Bulletin Editor is also a committee position and six meetings per annum are held on alternate months.

If you are interested, please discuss this with Eddie (president@tasfieldnats.org.au) or contact Deirdre (tfn.bulletin.editor@gmail.com) if you want to discuss what it entails.

Australian Natural History (ANH) Medallion Nomination

At the end of April, the Club was delighted to be allowed to submit by the ANH Medallion Organising committee Secretary, a joint nomination for our Life members Drs Genevieve Gates and David Ratkowsky. This award is managed by two ANH Committees and organised by the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria. This medallion has only ever been awarded to a single person it will therefore require their rules to be amended, so we may well not be

successful in year one, but our nomination will be valid for a total of three years. Our nomination stated 'Genevieve and David's collaboration could be described as a mutualistic symbiotic relationship and we did not believe we could in all fairness nominate one without the other.'

Medallion winners are announced by 1st Sept. each year.

Our member Dr Simon Grove was successful in winning this medallion in 2019.

'Le Souef Memorial Award'

This award is run by the 'The Entomological Society of Victoria.

In 2019 TFNC nominated our members Kristi Ellingsen and Tony Daley for this award, which recognizes the very substantial role played by amateurs in the development of knowledge of our insect fauna. Kristi and Tony are the creators of their invaluable website 'Insects of Tasmania' <https://sites.google.com/site/insectsoftasmania/home/1-quick-links>

Whilst we have been unsuccessful for the past two years with this nomination, we still hope that the third and final year of this nomination will bring them success.

Nominations to Awards such as these, whether successful or not, are a way for TFNC to recognise the huge contribution that some of our members make as amateur Field Naturalists.

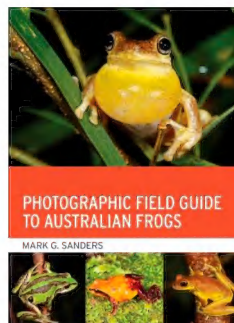
Betsey Island

We were very disappointed that the weather prevented the Betsey Island excursion proceeding in June. The committee will consider scheduling it again in 2022, but it needs further discussion. It depends on the availability of a suitable boat, good weather and Park ranger attendance. It also has to be held out of the Mutton Bird breeding season and thus May/June is our window of opportunity. We thank both John Rosendale whose suggestion it was and to Amanda Thomson for all the work that went into its organisation.

TFNC Books for Sale

Please don't forget that we sell the books that we have published and these can be purchased from the bookshop page on our website.

The third reprint of the second edition of 'Field Guide to Tasmanian Fungi' is selling very well.



Photographic Field Guide to Australian Frogs New publication

Written by a professional field naturalist and ecologist, this guide provides detailed comparative photos of key identification characters and individualised distribution maps. There is also information about calls such as dominant frequency, pulse rate and number of notes per call. Available from CSIRO books.

Finally...

Go to our website for information about TFNC, including forthcoming meetings and excursions, book sales, and links to other TFNC Clubs and their publications, and to see digital versions of past The Naturalist (our annual journal) and Bulletins.

Articles for this quarterly bulletin are always welcome.

If you have any comments or suggestions for speakers and excursions, or have feedback on the club moving to use iNaturalist or with any other suggestions. Please contact us by emailing our secretary at secretary@tasfieldnats.org.au



On Coal River Tier, July excursion
Photograph: Amanda Thomson